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ABSTRACT

The guide is designed to increase the effectiveness of persons who tutor learning disabled (LD) college students by providing information on LD characteristics as well as specific strategies and techniques for working with LD students. Initial sections define learning disabilities and list characteristics of LD college students in such areas as reading, written language, and listening and speaking. Contents include tutoring suggestions in three academic areas: (1) reading (reading flexibility, aids to comprehension, vocabulary development, and development of test questions); (2) writing (techniques to generate ideas, enrich vocabulary, improve organization, improve proofreading, and the use of computers to teach writing); (3) study skills (organization, questioning techniques, memory devices). Appendices include a college study skills checklist and a sample log for tutors to record student progress. (JW)

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SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE TUTORING: FOCUSING ON THE LEARNING DISABLED STUDENT IN THE LEARNING CENTER

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SUCCESSFUL TUTORING AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

INTRODUCTION:

This packet is designed to help you become a successful tutor. Although it primarily addresses the needs and concerns of learning disabled (LD) students, the information contained in this packet will also help you to work with all students who request tutoring.

Here is a list of characteristics of learning disabled students plus strategies and suggestions for you to use with your students. Every strategy will not be appropriate for every student. As you tutor, you will come to find that certain techniques will work best for you and that the techniques will vary based on the needs of the student. First you will find information that is applicable to tutoring situations in general. Then you will find information about tutoring in specific skills areas.

Meeting Social-Emotional Needs

-Be positive and give liberal praise when appropriate.

-Encourage student responsibility.

-Build upon strengths you see in the student.

-Whenever an unusual situation occurs, such as tutoring an overly-anxious student, contact your immediate supervisor or coordinator, possibly for further referral recommendations.

Planning and Communicating

-Set the tone for all sessions. Be organized and punctual. Display an attitude that is supportive, not condescending or patronizing.

-Record each session for efficient management. A possible recording form for your plan is included in this packet.

-Do not do the student's work or proofread it. Instead, provide him/her with strategies for becoming an independent learner.

-Expand your knowledge about learning disabilities.

-Whenever possible, contact faculty members. YOU MUST HAVE YOUR STUDENT'S CONSENT TO DO THIS. (Use forms if they exist.)

LEARNING DISABILITIES DEFINED

Here is the University of Wisconsin's definition of a learning disability:

> A learning disability (LD) is a disorder which affects the manner in which individuals with normal or above average intelligence take in, retain, and express information. Like interference on the radio or a fuzzy TV picture, incoming or outgoing information may become scrambled as it travels between the eye, ear, or skin, and the brain.
>
> A learning disability is inconsistent. It may present problems on Mondays, but not on Tuesdays. It may cause problems throughout grade school, seem to disappear during high school, and then resurface again in college. It may manifest itself in only one specific academic area, such as math or foreign language.
>
> A learning disability is frustrating. Persons with learning disabilities often have to deal not only with functional limitations, but also with the frustration of having to "prove" that their disabilities are real.
>
> A learning disability is not a form of mental retardation or an emotional disorder.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF LD COLLEGE STUDENTS

Although the learning disabled adolescent population is heterogeneous, there are two characteristics that all LD students have in common: (1) a discrepancy between apparent ability to learn and actual academic performance due to information-processing deficits that impact on components of learning; and, (2) experience of repeated failures which would be expected to reduce their achievement efforts and task motivation. Therefore, the interaction of cognitive and motivational factors always need to be considered when working with the LD student (Seidenberg, 1986).

Some LD students are afraid to risk failure and therefore do not attempt new tasks or put out the effort necessary to succeed. Tutors must help them feel that their work will produce positive results and encourage them to take the risks involved in all learning experiences.

The following is a list of possible characteristics displayed by LD college students. Some may apply to the student that you are tutoring.

STRENGTHS

1. Keen abstract reasoning ability
2. Verbal and articulate
3. Appropriate use of compensatory skills
4. May perform adequately on an assignment or test when time is not limited

READING SKILLS

1. Slow reading rate and/or difficulty in modifying reading rate in accordance with material difficulty
2. Difficulty following written directions
3. Difficulty identifying important points and themes
4. Reading skills are often not improved with standard remediation

WRITTEN LANGUAGE SKILLS

1. Diffculty with sentence structure (e.g. incomplete sentences, overuse of simple sentences, run-ons, poor use of grammar, missing inflectional endings)
2. Frequent errors in spelling and word usage, particularly when using specialized vocabulary and foreign words
3. Poor handwriting, slow writing and inability to copy materials correctly from a book or the chalkboard
4. Difficulty organizing written information to complete an essay, research report or written assignment

LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

1. Difficulty in orally expressing ideas that seem to be misunderstood
2. Difficulty telling a story or listing events in proper sequence or with clear focus
3. Difficulty comprehending or retaining a story or event in the proper order

MATHEMATICAL SKILLS

1. Incomplete mastery of basic facts and concepts
2. Difficulty recalling the sequence of an operational process; skipping steps
3. Difficulty understanding and retaining abstract concepts
4. Confusion in selecting appropriate process to complete word problems

ORGANIZATION AND STUDY SKILLS

1. Time management and assignment completion difficulties
2. Lack of overall organization in writing and speaking
3. Trouble with logical sequence of ideas
4. Difficulty attending to task

SOCIAL SKILLS

1. Some LD students have difficulties with new people and new situations
2. Some LD students show rigidity and difficulty when change in routine occurs
3. Difficulties in interpreting nonverbal messages in tone of voice

SUGGESTIONS FOR TUTORING READING

Your students need to extract information from course textbooks, journal articles, etc. They need to understand what they read and to remember it. For students with severe reading disabilities, try to locate texts on audio tape. Materials such as these may be located as resources for visually impaired students.

Try to understand the way your students read and process written information. Take an informal inventory of your students' reading skills. Have them read a short sample of text which you have read previously. Ask students a few questions about the passage. Questions should include main idea, significant details and perhaps an obvious inference. From the answers to these questions, you may be able to assess some of your students' strengths and weaknesses. Some students may remember many details but be unable to understand the author's general ideas. Other students will see the main idea(s), but will have a great deal of difficulty remembering any specific points. Some students will have both problems.

Here are four major categories of reading strategies that you can teach your student as you work on the subject matter of the course.

Please note that these are strategies for learning the material--its facts and concepts and their relationship to each other. Your students' professor will not ask for the main idea, for example, or if something is a time-order or cause-and-effect pattern. The professor will ask questions that call for the use of knowledge obtained by these strategies.

I. READING FLEXIBILITY

A. Poor readers tend to read everything with equal emphasis.

B. Ask: What is your purpose for reading?

1. If it is to find the general ideas of a chapter, essay, etc., then skim quickly, reading introduction (or first paragraph), subheadings, summary (or last paragraph), and graphics.

2. If it is to locate specific information, scan quickly until you find that information. Then read carefully in that spot.

3. If it is to learn new material, then read intensively, carefully using reading strategies described in section II and III below.

II. COMPREHENSION

The following is designed for use with informational materials such as textbooks.

A. Aids to comprehension are provided by most textbooks as follows:

1. Organization of the book

a) Units, chapters

Use these as an outline of what is in the book. Note how the chapters develop ideas of the unit. Pay particular attention to the title of a graph or table.

2. Organization of the chapter

Read the following to get an overview of the main points of each chapter:

a) Introduction
b) Subheading
c) Conclusion, summary
d) Graphs, tables
- Pay particular attention to the direction the information is presented in (up, down, left to right).
- Students should tell the tutor what the graph or table represents.

e) Review the questions at the end of the material.

3. Organization of material

There are organizational patterns to look for in written material. It will help students to remember the content if they are aware of the pattern. They can use the pattern as a study guide.

a) If time order, develop a time line.

b) If cause and effect, identify the cause and state how it brought about the effect.

c) If classification, list the category and the specific information that falls within that category.

d) If comparison-contrast, students should make a chart to show similarities and differences.

e) If factual listing, ask what overall main idea these facts refer to.

B. Learning strategies that students can use to increase comprehension:

1. Student should find the topic of the selection by using these questions or techniques:
   a) What is the whole selection about?
   b) If in doubt about the topic, examine all the details. What do they all refer to?
   c) When the student states the topic in his own words, it should be a word or a phrase but it does not need to be a complete sentence.
   d) Make sure the topic statement is not too broad or vague or too specific. For example, is it "drugs" or "drugs in Jr. High School?"

2. The student should find the **main idea** of the selection.
   a) The main idea is a statement, in a complete sentence, about the topic.
   b) The main idea is often stated
      1) in the first sentence
      2) in the last sentence
      3) in the middle sentence
   c) The main idea is sometimes unstated.

3. These questions are useful with narrative reading materials such as short stories and plays.
   a) Who performed the action?
   b) What happened?
   c) When did the event occur?
   d) Where did it occur?
   e) Why did it occur?
   f) How did it occur?

4. The student should learn strategies to improve critical reading skills.

The understanding of many reading selections will depend on the student's ability to read critically. Here are some of the main critical reading skills and suggestions for helping your students to become aware of them. The best technique for learning to read critically is discussion. As part of these discussions, the student may need to understand the following about a reading selection:

a) Is it fact or opinion?

1) A fact is what is true and can be checked.

2) An opinion is what we believe to be true but cannot verify.

b) What is the author's view toward the subject? What is the author's purpose in writing?

Examples: to entertain
to inform
to teach
to persuade

c) What conclusions can be drawn from the stated facts?

III. VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

A. Students should specify which words are troublesome in classwork or reading.

B. Teach appropriate vocabulary strategies as you work on the troublesome words. Some students may need assistance in learning each of the following strategies:

1. Each subject has a specialized vocabulary. Students should learn the special vocabulary in each field. Words may be entirely new or may be familiar words with specialized meanings in this subject.
2. How to use dictionary
3. How to use glossary
4. How to use context to pick correct meaning from dictionary and glossary
5. How to keep, use, and review from a word file on index cards

IV. STRATEGY APPLICATION

After your student has understood the material, you can work together to develop possible test questions based on the material. After you form the questions together, the student should answer them.

A. Student can turn the main idea into an essay question (how, why, compare, cause-effect) or a short-answer question as appropriate.

B. Student can develop short-answer questions from the facts contained in the reading material.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TUTORING WRITING

Your student needs to become effective in written communication. The level of the writing the student needs to attain depends upon the course's requirements. If the student is in a basic or introductory writing course, you should contact the instructor to determine what constitutes acceptable writing for that course. Be sure to obtain student's consent before you contact the instructor. If the student needs help in writing papers in a content area course, a basic level of organization, grammar, and spelling is expected.

Take part of the first tutoring session to determine what the student already knows about writing. A short sample of writing should be assigned; the student should spend no more than twenty minutes planning, writing, and proofreading the assignment. The paper should be corrected after the student leaves. Take note of errors in organization, grammar, and punctuation. Unusual or frequent spelling errors should also be recorded.

I. TECHNIQUES TO GENERATE IDEAS

Prewriting exercises help the student get started and generate ideas.

A. Discussion--Student brainstorms, allowing free thought about topic.

B. Freewriting--Student writes continuously for 10-15 minutes about any subject.

C. Journal--Student keeps a daily or weekly journal. This is not to be critically evaluated for grammatical errors.

D. Taping--Student tapes first draft into a recorder. This is expecially valuable if the student is reluctant to write or if the writing process causes the student to forget ideas for the paper.

E. Question list--Student compiles and organizes a list of questions and answers about a specific topic. This then provides the resource file from which to write.

II. TECHNIQUES TO ENRICH VOCABULARY

Teaching and encouraging the use of the following will enrich students' vocabulary.

A. Affixes and roots--Students learn prefixes and suffixes which increase vocabulary and spelling proficiency (e.g. un-, dis-, mal-, mis-, -ful, -ology).

B. Lists--Students keep lists of new words and of synonyms.

C. Glossary--Students use the glossary to learn the specific vocabulary of their course.

D. Thesaurus--Students use Thesaurus to broaden their word choice.

E. Visualizations and diagrams--Students can use or create these visual aids to understand and remember new words.

III. TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE ORGANIZATION OF WRITING

It is important that the student be able to recognize and use the four organizational structures of text (enumeration/description, sequence, causality and comparison/contrast).

To organize ideas, use the following:

A. An outline

B. An abstract

C. Note cards

D. A limited subject so as to have a workable thesis

IV. TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE PROOFREADING

A. The appearance of the paper must be legible and readable so that the student can proofread his/her work. It is helpful if the paper is neat, double spaced, has wide margins and is typed if handwriting is a problem.

B. Careful use of the following checklist will help students to find their errors.

1. Subject-verb agreement
2. Fragments and run-ons
3. Punctuation, capitalization and spelling
4. Wrong verb endings (-s, -ed)
5. Consistent tenses
6. Vague or awkward wording

C. Recitation

Have the student read the papers aloud to catch any errors and to check for smooth style. (LD students may have difficulty identifying their own errors and answering these questions.)

1. Is the paper clear and comprehensible?
2. Does the paper address the topic and question?

V. SKILLS AND PROCEDURES FOR USING COMPUTERS TO TEACH WRITING

Learning to write on the computer can be a motivating experience. For a student with motor or spelling problems, it can also be a rewarding and relaxing experience. It is important to assess a student's knowledge of computers, word processing programs, and writing ability, prior to the beginning writing session. A sample of the student's writing should be done with pen and paper initially.

A. Advantages of the computer

1. Computers make revision easier and faster.
2. There is never a need for recopying.
3. The work looks neater and is easier to read.

B. Finding the easiest word processing system available for the computers you have available

1. Remember that word processing software is compatible with certain computers only.
2. Check with your computer department to see what hardware is available, (e.g. IBM or Apple), and which word processing software is recommended.
3. Applewriter II, which is used on the Apple computer, is particularly easy to use.

C. Typing skills

1. Students should be able to practice typing on a computer.
2. A computer is good with LD students, because errors in typing and spelling can be corrected more easily than with pen and pencil or with a typewriter.

D. Basic computer skills

1. Students need to learn to load, clear the screen, save, move the cursor, insert, delete, double space, print, etc.
2. Many word processing systems have a computer tutorial that students can use by themselves.
3. It is also helpful to the student to have a printed copy of the most important commands.

E. Writing a paragraph, story, or essay

1. Help students get started by explaining free writing on the computer. The student types non-stop without regard to spelling, grammar, or even coherence. This allows the student to feel relaxed, realizing that the content is most important.
2. After the student prints the work and reads it aloud, changes can be made at that point.
3. During another session errors can be explained and exercises can be found to reinforce the skill.
4. At some point later in the semester the student can go back to the disk and correct other errors.

F. Editing on the computer

1. The student can see his or her work through "the window" of the computer; it allows the student to jump into any section and change it.
2. Reversals and misspellings can be corrected easily with keys that insert or delete letters.
3. Some word processing systems also have spell-checking devices which students find helpful.

G. Motivating the student

1. Many tutors and instructors find that students enjoy seeing their work printed and are motivated to work carefully, so that others can read their work.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TUTORING STUDY SKILLS

Scheduling time to study, to take care of personal obligations, to work, and to relax is essential. Although all students can benefit from instruction in study skills, LD students may need specific instruction in study skills techniques. When helping a student, consider which of the following skills the student needs to strengthen.

I. REFERENCE SKILLS

- A. Use of dictionary
- B. Use of graphic aids
- C. Library skills
- D. Parts of Text

II. NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

- A. Identifying and summarizing important information
- B. Outlining or classifying relevant information
- C. Using appropriate study information or materials when required (for tests, written/oral reports, class assignments)

III. TEST-TAKING SKILLS

- A. Test information--Encourage students to ask their teacher questions about the test:
  1. What type of test (essay, short answer, multiple choice, true/false)?
  2. Emphasis of test
     - a. class notes or text
     - b. amount of material to be covered

B. Set up study schedule which includes frequent review.

C. Skills for test taking

1. Essay tests

a. Become knowledgeable about different terms (compare, contrast, illustrate, etc.).

b. Prepare answers to possible essay questions before test.

c. Note the points allocated to each question and plan time accordingly.

2. Objective Tests

a. Move as rapidly as possible through the test the first time.

b. Answer easiest questions first.

c. Skip difficult questions but put a check next to them. When you have completed easy questions, go back and try difficult ones again.

d. Pay particular attention to clue words--always, never, usually, sometimes--in multiple choice tests.

e. Read all choices in multiple choice questions. Many LD students have a tendency to select the first or second choice -- they do not compare all the alternatives.

IV. STUDY STRATEGIES

A. Organize material

1. Material being presented to the tutee can be presented and organized in different ways.

a. List general topic and details

b. List attributes

c. Categorize

d. List by function

e. Develop time line

f. Use flow charts and outlines

2. Approach math problems in an organized fashion.

   a. Read problem

   b. Decide what information is relevant and what is not

   c. Work problem through

   d. Compare the derived answer with estimate

   e. Check answer

B. Using questioning techniques:

   1. Turn bold face headings into questions in textbooks.

   2. Form questions while re-reading class notes.

C. Using memory devices to momorize facts, etc:

   The best aid to a good memory is to understand the material. Use the comprehension strategies suggested in the reading section of this guide. Once the student understands the material, these devices will help to increase recall:

   1. Use formula--SQ3R--Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review

   2. Associate

      a. Associate ideas and the facts that develop or support them.

      b. Associate events in sequence.

c. Associate information with own experience: What does student already know about the subject?

d. Use mnemonic devices

When memorizing a list of words, you can make a new word, phrase, or name that is composed of the first letters of each word. An example is Roy G. Biv for the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet.

3. Underline, outline and summarize the ideas of the material.

4. Memorize the outline:

a. Look at material (main and minor points, supporting details) that was outlined.

b. Read and recite material to yourself several times.

c. Close the book with the outline and immediately write down what you have just recited.

d. Compare what you have just written with your original outline.

e. Repeat procedure until both sets of written material are identical.

5. Review Procedure:

a. Review quickly after learning.

b. Use the index of the text to review specific material.

c. Sum up the important ideas.

d. Review often.

We hope you will use the material you have read as a reference in your tutoring. You may find that certain sections of the booklet are especially useful and that you return to them again and again.

We have included two questionnaires that may also be of use to you. The first is a response sheet for you to fill out. The second is a self-assessment form that you may wish to have your student fill out.

Tutoring can be a rewarding experience for you and your student. Good luck to both of you!

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A P P E N D I X

1. Response Page

2. College Study Skills Checklist

3. Tutor Log

RESPONSE PAGE

The response page is an opportunity for you to examine what you have learned about tutoring LD students. It will also give your coordinator a starting point for further workshop training.

Describe any training or education (formal or informal) which might help you work with LD students.

Do you have any studying/learning strategies which you believe might be effective in working with LD students? Describe these strategies. How would you teach them or explain them to LD students?

Did you have any misconceptions about learning disabilities? What were they?

Did this material give you further insight into this subject or give you new ideas about tutoring? If yes, explain what you have learned from this. What further information do you feel would help you become a more effective tutor?

College Study Skills Checklist

Name: _____ Date: _____

Read each question carefully. Choose the letter (N = never, S = sometimes, A = always) that matches your study habits best.

N S A 1. Do you attend classes regularly?

N S A 2. Are you prepared for class?

N S A 3. Are you punctual for class?

N S A 4. Do you complete all homework assignments?

N S A 5. Do you have a well organized study/class schedule?

N S A 6. Do you give a lot of thought to your time management?

N S A 7. Do you physically prepare for listening and note-taking by sitting alertly with full attention?

N S A 8. Do you feel comfortable asking your teacher for help?

N S A 9. Do you understand the notes that you have taken in class?

N S A 10. After completing a reading assignment, do you review the lesson to organize the ideas?

N S A 11. Do you use outlines and summaries to highlight important information?

N S A 12. Do you study for one or two hours per day with full concentration?

N S A 13. Do you work on classwork daily?

N S A 14. Do you use the aid of a dictionary when you come across unfamiliar words?

N S A 15. Do you proofread your work and find your own errors?

N S A 16. Do you allow enough time for long term assignments?

N S A 17. Are your research papers well organized?

N S A 18. Do you usually study the correct information for tests?

N S A 19. Do you feel prepared for most tests?

N S A 20. Do you study with other students in the class?

TUTOR LOG

STUDENT'S NAME _____ TUTOR'S NAME _____

COURSE _____ PROFESSOR'S NAME _____

DATE	CONCEPT	MATERIALS	STUDENT'S LEARNING STRATEGY	EVALUATION OF STUDENT'S PROGRESS	TO BE DONE NEXT
	Distance problem - solving	Math p. 43	Make diagrams to visualize problem	Was able to solve problems 4,5; difficulty with problem 6, because diagram too complicated for student to make.	Problems 6,7 + tutor-made diagra similar to 6.